

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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R 141110Z FEB 75

FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3260

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

1. SUMMARY. MPLA PRESIDENT AGOSTINHO NETO GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE ON FEBRUARY 12. IN RESPONSE TO REPORTERS' QUESTIONS ON CONTINUING FNLA STRONG-ARM TACTICS AGAINST HIS PARTY, NETO DEFENDED HIS LACK OF RESPONSE-IN-KIND BY CITING THE CONTINUING NEED FOR LIBERATION GROUP UNITY AND THE DANGER OF INTER-PARTY WAR. HOWEVER, EARLIER IN THE PRESS CONFERENCE NETO ATTACKED MPLA DISSIDENT DANIEL CHIPENDA IN TERMS THAT COULD BE INTERPRETED AS AN ATTEMPT AT JUSTIFYING MPLA'S ARMED ASSALT LATER THAT NIGHT ON CHIPENDA'S LUANDA HEADQUARTERS (SEPTTEL) IN WHICH AT LEAST ONE PERSON WAS KILLED. END SUMMARY.

2. IN HIS FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE THE PRESS SINCE HIS ARRIVAL IN ANGOLA ON FEBRUARY FOUR, AGOSTINHO NETO HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN LUANDA ON FEBRUARY 12. AFTER BRIEF
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PREFATORY REMARKS CAUTIONING AGAINST EXPECTING TOO MUCH TOO

SOON FROM THE TRANSITION GOVERNMENT, NETO DECLARED THAT MPLA IS NOT A COMMUNIST MOVEMENT BUT "PROGRESSIVE." HE DEFENDED MPLA'S CREATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEES, SAYING THAT ANGOLA MUST NOT FALL INTO THE HANDS OF AN ELITE, EVEN A BLACK ONE. THE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEE MOVEMENT, WHICH IS UNDER STRONG ATTACK BY FNLA, GOES UNDER THE SLOGAN "PODER POPULAR" (PEOPLES POWER). NETO DENIED THAT MPLA IS "COMMUNIST," TERMING IT INSTEAD "PROGRESSIVE" AND COMPLAINED THAT THE COMMUNIST LABEL IS DUE TO MPLA EFFORTS TO HELP THE PEOPLE AND "REDISTRIBUTE WEALTH."

3. TURNING TO THE ECONOMIC SCENE NETO DEFENDED THE RIGHT TO STRIKE ONLY PROVIDED STRIKES ARE USED AS A LAST RESORT AND ORGANIZED BY PROPERLY CONSTITUTED UNIONS. LIKE SAVIMBI ON NUMEROUS PRIOR OCCASIONS, NETO URGED WORKERS TO LABOR DILIGENTLY FOR A NEW ANGOLA.

4. CHIPENDA: NETO STATED THAT THE EXISTENCE OF GROUPS OF ARMED BANDITS "LIKE CHIPENDA" WAS HARMFUL TO ANGOLAN TRANQUILITY. DESCRIBING THE CHIPENDA PROBLEM AS ONE WHICH WOULD NOT DISAPPEAR ON ITS OWN, HE SAID "WE WILL ATTACK IT HEAD ON." THEN, APPARENTLY REVERSING FIELD, HE SAID "I THINK THAT'S A JOB FOR THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT." (THE NIGHT OF FEB 12/13 NETO'S FORCES REPORTEDLY WOUNDED AND ATTACKED CHIPENDA'S OFFICE IN A WHITE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD AND SUBSEQUENTLY CLAIMED THEY OCCUPIED THE BUILDING. SEPTTEL FOLLOWS.)

5. SEPARATISM IN NORTH AND SOUTH: IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION NETO ADMITTED THE POSSIBILITY OF OVAMBO SEPARATISM IN THE SOUTH BUT SAID HE HAD NO INFORMATION THAT IT HAD ALREADY BEGUN. ON CABINDA, NETO STATED THAT UNFORTUNATELY CERTAIN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES CONTINUED TO SEE CABINDA AS A SEPARATE COMMUNITY. SPECIFICALLY, ON NGOUABI'S STATEMENT IN "JEUNE AFRIQUE" THAT CABINDA SHOULD BE A SEPARATE ENTITY, NETO DESCRIBED THE CONGOLESE PRESIDENT AS A "GOOD FRIEND OF ANGOLA WHO WILL REVISE HIS THINKING AS SOON AS WE TALK PERSONALLY." NETO HINTED THAT CERTAIN LARGE COMPANIES WERE POSSIBLY INVOLVED IN CABINDAN SEPARATISM AS WELL AS CERTAIN OF ANGOLA'S NEIGHBORS (READ ZAIRE).

6. MPLA'S ABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF: IN AN EMBARRASSING EXCHANGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NETO WAS FORCED TO ADMIT THAT FNLA HAS HELD AN MPLA OFFICE SUB-DIRECTOR IN NORTHERN ANGOLA PRISONER FOR THE PAST 15 DAYS. NETO CLAIMED MPLA CAN SEND A FORCE TO RESCUE HIM BUT THAT TO DO SO WOULD BE HARMFUL TO LIBERATION GROUP UNITY. HE ALSO ADMITTED FNLA HAS BEEN HARRASSING MPLA MILITANTS IN THE EAST WITHOUT SUFFERING ANY RETALIATION.

7. COMMENT: NETO'S PROTESTATIONS OF PUTTING INTER-PARTY COOPERATION

AHEAD OF REACTION TO FNLA PROVOCATION FOOLS NO ONE FAMILIAR WITH
NETO'S CONSISTENT RECORD OF INTOLERANCE TOWARD HERESY IN HIS OWN
RANKS AND ACUTE RIVALRY WITH FNLA. HIS LACK OF FIGHT WILL
BE UNIFORMLY INTERPRETED HERE AS EVIDENCE OF HIS GROUP'S WEAK
MILITARY POSITION VIS-A-VIS FNLA. IT IS POSSIBLE MPLA
CHAGRIN OVER THE WEAK POSITION DISPLAYED ON FEB 12 IN THE
PRESS CONFERENCE MAY HAVE LED TO THE SUBSEQUENT ATTACK ON
CHPENDA'S HEADQUARTERS.
KILLORAN

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